

(De)railing Mobility:  
Opera, Stasis, and Locomotion on Late-Nineteenth-Century Italian Tracks

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On November 1, 1871, *Lohengrin* premiered amid much local buzz at Bologna's Teatro Comunale. It was—famously—the first of Wagner's works to be staged in Italy, over twenty years after its first performance in Weimar. Rumors that the Comunale was working to produce the opera had been in the air since the summer of 1869, when news had leaked that the impresario Luigi Scalaberni was pursuing this enterprise, most likely in a shared initiative with the local authorities and with Wagner's Italian publisher (Casa Lucca).<sup>1</sup> That project had seemingly been conceived with a double axis in mind: as a combined operation between the theaters of Bologna and Lugo, both managed by Scalaberni.<sup>2</sup> The enterprise, however, failed, and when two years later *Lohengrin* was brought out on the Comunale's stage, Scalaberni was no longer behind it. Well into the summer of 1871 the *impresa* of the theater was still vacant, the municipal authorities eventually setting their minds for its direction on Emidio Lambertini.<sup>3</sup>

The two-year wait for the opera did, however, prove worthwhile. Once it debuted, *Lohengrin* remained in the spotlight of both the local and the national press for weeks. It was produced, in an abridged Italian translation, with a cast that included the tenor Italo Campanini (who would become the most famous early Italian Lohengrin); the Austrian and German sopranos Bianca Blume and Maria Löwe Destin; the bass Giuseppe Galvani; the baritones Pietro Silenzi and Ludovico Buti; and, most notably, the distinguished conductor Angelo Mariani (see Fig. 1). The Bavarian composer and Kapellmeister Ernst Frank was appointed *regisseur*, a figure new to Italian opera houses of the time. Flocks of visitors, including many political and musical authorities, traveled from all over Italy to attend the performances. These were reportedly a tour de force of orchestral and choral direction, while the *mise-en-scène*

(with sets by Carlo Ferrario) was described by one local newspaper as of “truly Asiatic magnificence.”<sup>4</sup>

[INSERT FIG. 1 ABOUT HERE]

The cultural politics underpinning this premiere are well-known. Since the mid 1860s, Bologna’s Comunale had brought out a stream of new works from abroad: mostly grand operas by Meyerbeer and Gounod, alongside Verdi’s own *Don Carlo*. The local administration, which directly controlled the theater, was deeply involved in these productions, key as they were to the city’s cultural competition with other urban centers (Milan at the top of the list). The foreign repertoire it promoted was largely unknown in Italy, with the partial exception of Florence, which during the 1840s and 1850s had internationalized its stage through performances of French and German opera and instrumental music. The 1871 *Lohengrin* was in a sense only the latest in a series of forward- and outward-looking stagings aimed at cementing Bologna’s cosmopolitan credentials. It was a skilful manoeuvre of local cultural politics, one that, as Axel Körner has noted, was part and parcel of the “modernising ideology of nationalism.”<sup>5</sup>

A number of circumstances nevertheless gave weight to the unique cultural (and, later, scholarly) significance of this 1871 Wagner moment. In a bid to increase the prestige of *Lohengrin*’s premiere, the municipal authorities had planned for it to coincide with the International Congress of Prehistoric Anthropology and Archaeology, held in Bologna in early October. The opera was ultimately delayed, but the irony looming behind the quasi-concurrence of an “antediluvian” congress and Wagner’s so-called “music of the future” was capitalized on by the press: one critic noted that this juncture was tantamount to a cry of “*Down with the present*”—a present obfuscated by the “double fog of the past and the future.”<sup>6</sup> Further impetus to political-cultural rumination came with hindsight. The European premiere

of *Aida* in Milan in February 1872; the sensational failure of *Lohengrin* in the same city in 1873; a string of other Wagner premieres in Bologna in subsequent years: all these events bolstered a long-standing historiographical staple, namely the view of Bologna as the late-nineteenth-century Italian capital of Wagnerism (or, in the words of a contemporary critic, “*Le Bayreuth italien*”).<sup>7</sup>

Opera, of course, played a key role in urban strategies of self- and external representation on the Italian peninsula in the nineteenth century. In recent years, musicologists and historians alike have retraced city-specific repertoire trends, as well as a multiplicity of local and trans-local discourses. They have suggested that the influence and geographical reach of the political narratives that had long been associated with opera and Risorgimento Italy *tout court* were smaller than generally assumed, and largely date from the later decades of the country’s nation-building (following Unification).<sup>8</sup> Scholarly emphasis on discursive spaces of local identity construction (newspapers, music journals, city council minutes, etc.) has nevertheless also meant that late-nineteenth-century Italy now comes to us built around largely “discrete” operatic milieux, ones that would seem to communicate with each other almost exclusively at the level of the circulation of ideas. The movements of people and objects in which historical perceptions were embedded have, for the most part, yet to be pinned down. We know, for instance, that from around the 1860s Bologna and Florence were caught up in close operatic and cultural relationships. Scholars have referred to them in passing: in terms of “a certain cultural dependence” of Florence on Bologna; or of a shifting cultural economy whereby the latter place gradually took over from and became capable of “export[ing] its culture to the Tuscan capital.”<sup>9</sup> But what did such trans-municipal relations consist of? Were they at all shaped by physical movements? Could gaining a better sense of who or what mediated those interactions reveal a tension between mobility and stasis, or discursive and material realms?

In this article, I shall focus on a particular form and medium of operatic interplay between late-nineteenth-century Italian cities. I start by resituating the 1871 Bologna *Lohengrin* within a less stationary framework than the one in which it has traditionally been set by scholars. The production was inscribed within a number of journeys: national and international; historical and fictional; past, future, and near-contemporaneous. Its mobility resonated on the operatic stage and equally spoke to a broader transportation context. The pioneering nature of one particular movement—the relocation by train of the entire Wagner staging from Bologna to a different locale—anticipated trends that would take root in subsequent years, when opera productions started to go more regularly on the move. After pursuing *Lohengrin*'s travels, then, I will turn to some of those later transfers, pausing both on the institutional quagmires they created and on their techno-cultural reverberations within the wider context of railway travel.

Digging into these late-nineteenth-century operatic translocations lays bare conflicting historical attitudes to the political, technological, and aesthetic implications of movement itself.<sup>10</sup> The notion of mobility as a signifier of modernity (as well as modernization) and globalisation is of course well-established—and one into which opera, particularly its nineteenth-century expansionary drive, fits all too well. Pursuing this notion in a historical context nevertheless raises a number of methodological questions. In his account of some of the ways in which mobility has been conceptualized in modern Western societies, Tim Cresswell points out how the apparently “intangible nature” of this experience “makes it an elusive object of study.”<sup>11</sup> The sphere of representation—the generation of meanings at the intersection between politics, ideology, and social power—is central to Cresswell's explorative endeavor. Just as important, though, are embodied practices of movement, mobility being a thoroughly social experience “co-produced” at the intersection of individual wills, objects, technologies, societal and cultural expectations, spaces traversed, and so on. Stephen Greenblatt similarly expresses a commitment to understanding the actual working (including

the agency) of movement when he calls for microhistories of cultural mobility tuned in to the dialectics of endurance and change, fixity and motion. What we should really be concerned with as scholars, Greenblatt advises, is understanding the mechanisms through which movement challenges, or at times brings into play, forms of resistance and structural constraints.<sup>12</sup>

In what follows, I shall grapple with some of these tensions, and do so by focusing on a specifically Italian context of analysis. Besides revealing the institutional labor and practical expedients that late-nineteenth-century opera productions on the move involved, I will discuss some of their broader aesthetic and cultural implications by examining them in conjunction with the technological apparatus of the railway. Railway operatic mobility, I suggest, lends itself to probing questions of mediation: questions that underlie both the changing status of opera at the *fine secolo* and notions of sound reproduction that were emerging around the same time. Seen from this perspective, the operatic transfers I describe do more than add a more material (and in many ways ambiguous) dimension to Italian translocal identity politics: they point to opera as a key site of a burgeoning technological consciousness.

### ***“Ito per ferrovia”***<sup>13</sup>

In the summer of 1871, Bologna’s mayor Camillo Casarini, the publishers Francesco and Giovannina Lucca, and a group of employees from the Comunale (including theater agent, stage technician, and costume and set designers) set off to Munich to attend performances of *Lohengrin* at the Hof- und Nationaltheater. Munich was a popular destination for Italians desperate to get to know Wagner’s works, and by 1867 it had become connected to northern Italy by the Brenner railway line. This trip was an official, municipally-funded expedition, made, as one *bolognese* explained, “to consider and copy that which befits us.” The Comunale’s *Lohengrin* was from early on heralded as an aesthetic product that would adhere to the German production “with unequalled accuracy.”<sup>14</sup> The performances were enveloped in an

aura of transplanted authenticity—a desire to recreate both the sonic and the material dimension of the Munich staging—even though the actual details of what was copied and how it was done remain unclear.<sup>15</sup>

This physical as well as cultural move was extended in subsequent months. Five weeks after *Lohengrin*'s opening night at the Comunale, conductor, cast, chorus, orchestra, stage band, theater staff, sets, costumes, and stage machinery were all relocated by train—some 130 kilometres away—to Florence's private Teatro Pagliano, an undertaking that required the transportation of between 300 and 400 people. The transfer and subsequent three performances were arranged at the last minute by one of the Florentine theater's impresarios: no less a person than Scalaberni himself, who was running the season at the Pagliano with Michele Morri. The operation required negotiations between the two opera houses, the two mayors, and a few third parties. Following *Lohengrin*'s triumphant debut in Bologna, Scalaberni had approached Florence's mayor, Ubaldino Peruzzi, in the hope that he would both obtain a municipal subsidy to pay for the transfer and facilitate arrangements with Bologna's city council. After Unification, publicly-funded opera houses posed logistical obstacles to such full-blown translocations: orchestras, choruses, and staff were municipal employees, while so-called *deputazioni dei pubblici spettacoli* (committees with members chosen by the city councils) oversaw all theatrical business. Municipal theaters were no commercial venues that could buy in or tour complete productions. Scalaberni could dictate at will at the Pagliano, which received no municipal *dote*; but he had to secure leaves of absence for the Bologna performers and staff during their time in Florence. To complicate things further, some of the chorus members were due at La Scala at the time of the Florentine performances. The impresario was thus forced to ask for permission (again via Peruzzi) from the Milan theater's management to delay their arrival. Peruzzi acted promptly with Casarini, Mariani, and the Milanese authorities;<sup>16</sup> yet neither he nor his *giunta* were willing to hear Scalaberni and Morri's requests for financial support, despite their arguments that the performances would enhance Florence's

cultural prestige.<sup>17</sup> In the circumstances, Scalaberni and Morri were compelled to raise public subscriptions to finance the enterprise.<sup>18</sup>

On December 6, the ominous prediction of a staunchly anti-Wagnerian critic—*Lohengrin*, “[b]orn in, or, to be more precise, transplanted to Bologna, will die in Bologna”—was magnificently overturned.<sup>19</sup> A colossal troupe from the Comunale—consisting, according to one account, of a chorus of 84, an orchestra of 90, 40 dancers, 80 extras, and a stage band of 30—was greeted at Florence’s Maria Antonia train station by the local National Guard.<sup>20</sup> Its relocation literally drained Bologna of its musical resources, since the majority of the Comunale’s orchestra and chorus members were also employees of other local musical institutions. The depletion was such that the Cappella di San Petronio (the main church and a symbol of civic prestige) was forced to cancel Vespers and a Solemn Pontifical Mass owing to shortage of performers.<sup>21</sup>

The project was, by most reports, unprecedented in its scope. As critics from Bologna as well as Florence noted, the three performances at the Pagliano (on December 8-10) would feature the *same* production as the Comunale’s, down to each single, material as well as human, component. A journalist for a Florentine paper elaborated:

I am not using the verb “to transport” at random. We are talking about putting on *Lohengrin* at the Pagliano theater with the same performers who at the moment are singing it to great success at Bologna’s Comunale; and we are also talking about bringing the scenery, the stage machinery, the costumes, Mariani in his role as *maestro concertatore* and conductor, as well as some, if not most or all, of the Bologna orchestra.<sup>22</sup>

Everything would be “bagged [*insaccato*] with the low-speed cargo train n. 49,” remarked the Florentine newspaper *Il fanfulla* with a gastronomic pun on the word “*insaccare*” (which also refers to the act of stuffing meat into casing, to produce cold cuts like salami).<sup>23</sup> *Lohengrin* was to be transported at once as a whole and in a dismantled form: “in one piece, or, to put it better,

in about 400 pieces,” as another commentator, thrilled at the size of the human contingent, hastened to clarify.<sup>24</sup> No less tricky than relocating performers and staff were the arrangements for props and scenery, which belonged to the Comunale. Information is scant, but we know from documents concerning the redelivery of these materials that some of the backdrops were unstitched and then re-sewn during the journey, presumably because they had to be adjusted to the larger size of the Pagliano.<sup>25</sup>

This operatic relocation was, to my knowledge, the first of its kind in Italy (and possibly in Europe): an instance of operatic mobility that at once challenged the institutional system of municipal theaters and, as we shall see later, pointed to a growing medial status for opera. The stakes of Scalaberni’s project were high for both parties involved. Bothersome practicalities aside, Bologna’s prestige could only benefit from the media impact of an event that amounted to the exportation of a local product with considerable cultural cachet. Indeed, Casarini pressed for control over the performances in Florence. When Mariani fell ill and proved unable to conduct the dress rehearsal, Bologna’s mayor lost his temper, Peruzzi and Scalaberni having failed to consult with him on the conductor’s substitution.<sup>26</sup> In this exchange, Florence was on the weaker side: not only were the local authorities questioned in their decision-making, but the symbolic capital of the whole trading operation risked undermining the cultural prestige of a city that had once been pre-eminent in the promotion of foreign music. In a polemical outburst, a Tuscan critic protested that the transfer fell short of entailing the transportation to Florence of the entire Bologna opera house.<sup>27</sup>

Diplomatic and practical challenges notwithstanding, the scope of Scalaberni’s enterprise seemed at one point on the verge of expanding further. Rumors were aired that the Comunale’s production, packed (as it were) in the impresario’s “duffel bag,” would set off onto a national, possibly even international, tour.<sup>28</sup> The press reported the news with some inconsistencies: the destinations mentioned were Rome and Turin; or the Théâtre-Italien in Paris; or a “*grande tournée à travers la peninsula*,” or a “tour [of] the towns of Italy and



Germany.”<sup>29</sup> Albeit initially conceived, and eventually abandoned, as a one-off, the opera’s translocation prefigured end-of-the-century grand touring enterprises. The most obvious difference from earlier practices, whether in Europe or the Americas, lay in the size of the human and material contingent involved. While touring opera in the first half of the century, as well as what John Rosselli called “package deals,” typically involved only the travel of the company (with costumes) and a few orchestral players, the relocation of the entire musical corps and visual dimension of a production required the mobilization of a bulkier institutional and technological infrastructure.<sup>30</sup>

*Trasporti* or *trasferimenti di spettacolo*, as such full-blown transfers came to be known, became relatively common in Italy, both locally and at a trans-municipal level, in subsequent years. Take the Pergola and the Pagliano theaters in Florence, for instance. The former was still owned by the Accademia degli Immobili, the group of aristocrats that had founded it in the distant 1656. Even though it was not a municipal theater in the same sense as Bologna’s Comunale, it acted as the elite opera house on which hinged the city’s attempts at cultural self-representation. It received a more-or-less annual subsidy, subject to negotiations, from the city council, who was represented on the theater’s board of directors. The larger and more middle-class Teatro Pagliano, inaugurated in 1854, instead relied entirely on day-to-day incomes. These differences in management caused no little fuss with the city council when the seasons happened to be run by one and the same impresario, for he often endeavored to transfer productions between the two venues. Scalaberni adopted this strategy during 1875-77.<sup>31</sup> Besides obtaining permission to relocate singers and orchestral players—something that was seen as undermining the Pergola’s prestige—the main problem was constituted by the scenery. The impresario’s repeated requests, usually to the exasperation of the Accademia and the municipality, that he might use *tele di carta* instead of canvas exemplify the stakes, material as well as political, of such exchanges. Contemporary accounts suggest that paper was more easily folded, and could therefore be more easily transported; but its employment undermined

the stature of the performance, thus being admitted by the authorities only in exceptional circumstances.<sup>32</sup> What is more, the relocation of performers caused broader concerns citywide, for “nobody pays ten when they can listen to the same thing paying four,” as Peruzzi bemoaned in the wake of the stray production of Donizetti’s *La favorita*, roaming between the Pergola and the Pagliano.<sup>33</sup> Sameness was the escamotage of an impresario facing financial obstacles, but it carried with it undesirable aesthetic and cultural costs.

Even more challenging was setting up systematic translocations between cities. During 1876-77, Scalaberni was either directly or indirectly in charge of the seasons both at the two Florentine theaters and at Bologna’s Comunale. As early as the summer of 1876, he sought out a “combination” between the three venues.<sup>34</sup> On the strength of a year-long deal with the publisher Lucca that enabled him to hire and freely circulate scores on all three stages, he approached the Comunale’s and Pergola’s managements disclosing his intentions to transport some of the upcoming productions from Bologna to Florence.<sup>35</sup> The operas caught up in this circuit—Meyerbeer’s *L’aficana*, Auteri-Manzocchi’s *Dolores*, and Wagner’s *Rienzi*—were transplanted with the same scenery and mostly the same casts (chorus and orchestra were not, on this occasion, relocated). Again, permissions had to be obtained from the local authorities for use of paper sets—a sine-qua-non for Scalaberni to be willing to undertake his duties.<sup>36</sup> The news about the *trasporti* soon made it into the press: one critic for the Milanese *Gazzetta dei teatri* announced that “*Dolores* [would] leave the treacherous stage of Bologna and be transported, lock, stock, and barrel, to Florence.”<sup>37</sup>

Unlike the 1871 *Lohengrin*, these relocations were less improvised enterprises than projects involving some level of prior arrangement between the various opera houses. They did not, however, amount to what we today know as co-productions; nor to early-twentieth-century “trust” experiments aimed at creating a network for the circulation of stagings between the principal opera houses of Europe and the Americas.<sup>38</sup> Such global circuits, the shipping and trucking involved, were and are sustained by shared capital—in the case of co-productions, a

joint ownership of sets, costumes, and artistic direction between various companies. For all Scalaberni's anxiety to promote mobility, the stagings he embarked upon during the mid 1870s were instead grounded in a fixed, stationary conception of theater-making, one in line with contemporary Italian attempts at establishing so-called *teatro a repertorio*. This innovation involved a shift, modeled on the practices of northern European opera houses, toward stable companies, as well as sets, costumes, and props for ready use stored with the theaters. This system had been under discussion in Italy for some time, yet it failed to take root in most opera houses until well into the twentieth century.<sup>39</sup> Scalaberni, "the planning impresario *par excellence*" (as he was designated after his *Lohengrin* enterprise), was recognized by some as the early instigator of this practice.<sup>40</sup> He was a figure who stood on the threshold of the old and the new, a man caught up between the conflicting impulses of his age. He sought out routes for disengaging opera from local, institutional bonds, and yet he operated within, and even reinforced, that apparatus. The dialectics of stasis and motion that his late-life impresarial endeavors encapsulated is poignantly evoked by one last, all-too-dragging procession, which drew the curtain on his entire life. After he died—ironically, he passed away on the same day that by his efforts *Rienzi* received its Bologna premiere—over 400 of the *crème de la crème* of Florence lined up to escort his body to its final resting place.<sup>41</sup> Today, all movements gone, his mortal remains lie in a half-abandoned Florentine cemetery.

### **Railway Mo(ve)ments**

Scalaberni's *Lohengrin* transfer was enabled by a modern technological apparatus. The Bologna-Florence railway, along which the Comunale's performers traveled, had been completed in 1864, in the wake of a post-Unification boom in establishing connections between the various Italian regions. By 1861, Bologna was a key node in a network that linked the main urban centers of the former Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia and the Papal States. Its connection to Florence via Pistoia meant that that system became integrated with the Leopolda

railway (in Tuscany), which ran up to the thriving port of Livorno. The northern and central-southern sections of Italy's railway network, which in 1865 was entrusted by the government to five multi-regional companies, thus also became connected. Inter-regional traffic was to remain slow and troublesome for years owing to lack of uniform policies, but the developments were nevertheless constantly and eagerly monitored.<sup>42</sup>

Contemporary accounts exude wonder at those modern technological feats of railway work and travel. The Bologna-Florence line was a major engineering accomplishment that required the excavation of no fewer than 46 tunnels across the Appennines—a figure which not even opera reviewers failed to acknowledge in their *Lohengrin* marginalia.<sup>43</sup> As tunnels were opened through hundreds of metres of rock, travelers jotted down descriptions of locomotives “serpentining up” the mountains, “plung[ing] into the[ir] viscera,” and emitting “roar[s] of echoing sound.”<sup>44</sup> The material shape of the landscape and the new geographies that railway travel came to channel took visual form in maps and photographic reportages compiled with both scientific and artistic purposes. A three-metre long *Panorama della strada-ferrata delli Appennini Bologna-Pistoja-Firenze* was published in 1864 after the inauguration of that line (see Fig. 2). The lithograph's commission seemingly came from the same company that had carried out the engineering work and sponsored a photo essay. Surveys were executed along the entire route, for to detail (as railway guides also did) the topographical and historical features of the lands that passengers traveled through was to fathom—to make legible—the formless spectacle that rolled by outside their carriages' windows.<sup>45</sup>

[INSERT FIG. 2 ABOUT HERE]

The political and economic impact of early Italian railways is less widely accepted today than it once was. If liberal historians celebrated *strade ferrate* as vehicles of Italian unity and progress, their enthusiasm has been tempered by more cautious recent scholars, drawing on

a wide range of statistical data.<sup>46</sup> Historical debates around and about the topic nonetheless were inextricably wrapped up in political-cultural arguments. As early as the mid 1840s, in the early days of Italian railway construction, the Turinese statesman and future Italian prime minister Camillo Cavour and the general Giacomo Durando (also from Piedmont) had in similar ways envisaged a close connection between the development of a modern transportation system and the consolidation of ties—social, economic, and cultural—between Italians from various regions. Only “an incessant movement of people in all directions” made possible by an organic railway network, Cavour reckoned, would eradicate petty municipal self-interests and bring about national integration—what Durando elegantly termed a “material and moral rapproch[ement]” of the various parts of the peninsula.<sup>47</sup>

Piedmont, the most industrially developed part of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, was the pre-Unification state with the most extended railway network (which constituted the 38 percent of the total length of tracks existing in Italy in 1860). When in 1868, in an essay entitled “Giuseppe Verdi e la musica italiana,” the music critic Francesco Flores D’Arcais brought up the impact of railway travel, the extension of the national network itself had almost tripled.<sup>48</sup> D’Arcais singled out this heightened material connectivity, at a broader European level, as one of the roots of recent changes in the musical arts. He dwelt on the cultural effects brought about by three recent technological breakthroughs: steam power, electricity, and railways—the classic nineteenth-century triad. Besides collapsing distances, D’Arcais argued, these inventions meant that “differences between peoples in terms of their habits and customs” were becoming ever slimmer, to the point that they would one day “altogether vanish.” “The arts and letters,” he continued, “no longer have any boundaries,” a rhetorical gesture by which he at once laid out unlimited territory for Verdi’s dominion and justified the more eclectic aspects of his music.<sup>49</sup> D’Arcais’s technological gloss was rooted in tropes and anxieties that transcended his topic and historical moment; and yet it also pointed to a recent, transnational railway boom. Lines were just being opened across the Alps, resulting in a more direct access

route from northern Europe to the Far East through the Suez Canal starting from 1869. At the inauguration of Parliament in Rome in November 1871, literally days before *Lohengrin* was transferred to Florence, King Victor Emanuel II himself welcomed the “speediness of the journeys and the ease of the exchanges” between nations foreshadowed by the recent transalpine advancements.<sup>50</sup>

*Lohengrin*’s relocation, then, was embedded in a discursive and infrastructural context that heightened its cultural as well as technological significance. A by-product of burgeoning forms of physical mobility, the moving production participated in, and at the same time challenged, widespread alignments between expanding facilities of railway and operatic travel. As well as rerouting classic trajectories of touring opera—from “outward” movements, often departing from Italy, to movements toward and within Italy—it stood for a specifically Italian transfer, one that could hardly be fathomed through the interpretive models in operation in other countries. The center-periphery dynamics that British or French theatrical translocations at once shored up and undermined are barely useful for comprehending Italian operatic mobilities. Italy was no “one large town with iron streets,” no “one gigantic city” of the kind that spellbound contemporary English impresarios. Not even by the utmost stretch of the technological and political imagination could its cultural geographies be shaped into the radial economy that London and its metropolitan surroundings seemed able to sustain.<sup>51</sup> Power relationships between urban centers were more fluid, operatic traffic less steadily channelled along predictable arteries. Italian railway debates, furthermore, were focused less on the advantages of faster, direct travel than on heightened connectivity. Many contemporary observers reckoned that winding lines should be preferred to straight ones in railway planning whenever several historic centers of production and culture across the peninsula could thus become linked together.<sup>52</sup>

Tellingly, *Lohengrin*’s transfer almost coincided with a pivotal political move: the relocation of the Italian capital itself, sanctioned in February 1871. Following six years as the

seat of the national government, Florence lost its capital status to Rome, which had been freed from papal rule in September 1870 and shortly afterwards annexed to the Italian Kingdom. The handover set in motion a complex machine for transferring the entire diplomatic and administrative apparatus. Thousands of officers, who in 1865 had moved from Turin (the former capital) to Florence, now packed up their possessions, vacated their desks and houses, and set off again. The Florentine population decreased by about 27,000 units (ca. 14 percent) in two years.<sup>53</sup> The political and socio-economic repercussions were immediate, and were exacerbated at a symbolic level by the abrupt interruption of a phase of grand-scale urban renovation that had been aimed at enhancing the city's image during its period as the capital.<sup>54</sup> Florence's divestment, which took place largely in the summer months of 1871, was at once physical and, broadly speaking, spiritual. Ugo Pesci, a journalist and the author of a collection of Florentine memoirs, recalled in later years how "every single one of those thousands upon thousands of leavers . . . carried away with themselves some atom, however invisible and imponderable, of that material and moral complex" that had been late 1860s Florence.<sup>55</sup>

Such capital-city relocations had a significant impact on railway traffic. A rapid increase in the number of trains traveling through particular nodes in the network during these handovers suggests that the 1871 Florence-Rome transfer must have been accompanied by a good measure of railway activity.<sup>56</sup> An anonymous critic for Ricordi's *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* pointed out the proximity, at once temporal and symbolic, of this political move with Scalaberni's operatic one. Writing with a good dab of outsider irony (mixed with a trademark opposition to Wagner), he asserted that, "[f]ollowing the opening of Parliament in Rome," *Lohengrin*'s transfer to Florence "was no doubt the most important event that could have happened in the Kingdom of Italy."<sup>57</sup> In both cases, the material and ideological implications of the relocations cannot be captured only through metaphors of motion. Both projects were carried out within and against institutional and infrastructural conditions that resisted the free

circulation of human and material actors, something that grounds the transfers in a complex dialectics of fixity and movement, of permanence and change.

The mobility of Scalaberni's production was also conflated with other, more poetic, types of movement. The transfer was read against certain aspects of Wagner's opera itself: its tensions between the near and the far, coming and going, which became entangled with the production's journey. The operatic stage turned into an interface where various spaces and travels could meet. The famous scene in act 1 where Lohengrin enters on board a boat towed by a swan was one of the pieces that generated the greatest enthusiasm among Italian audiences. More than that, it was elevated to the symbol of the production's own glamorous mobility. As plans for the transfer to the Pagliano started to materialize, one Florentine journalist joked that, "instead of arriving by railway, [the opera would] come on board the ship led by the poetic swan; and this perhaps in order to avoid quarrels over the international train" (then a hot topic of discussion within the government).<sup>58</sup> On the day of the operatic troupe's departure for Florence, the "divo Mariani" himself was soaked up in this blurring of distinct events: one *bolognese* critic announced that the conductor was "due to board th[at] evening the mystic ship together with the sacred battalion of the artists he le[d] as an expert captain."<sup>59</sup> As the Comunale's production rolled on to a different theater and city, its transit began to mirror—and in turn be mirrored by—the internal movements of *Lohengrin*'s dramatic fabric.

## Nexus Systems

One late-nineteenth-century caricature captures this interplay of distinct mobilities, in ways that speak both to ambivalent attitudes toward technology and to the integration of the railway into opera's hard media system. Its author, Augusto Grossi, was a prolific painter and illustrator from Bologna, as well as the founder of various satirical magazines. The lithograph, entitled "La caravana del *Lohengrin*," was first published (together with a description) in John Grand-Carteret's *Wagner en caricatures* in 1892, although it was most likely executed at the



time of the event it portrays. It depicts the Comunale's 1871 production literally on the move (see Fig. 3). A giant Scalaberni is riding a railway-driven swan, at the command of his operatic caravan en route to Florence. Various people feature who were involved in the premiere: Mariani (dressed as wizard, in one of Scalaberni's pockets); one of the sopranos (in another pocket); Campanini, starring as Lohengrin (on the neck of the swan); and the conductor of Bologna's municipal band, Alessandro Antonelli (poking, along with the musical instruments, out of the wicker basket). The sets are also being transported—they pop out of the bottom of the wagon—and the choristers, with their reputation as drinkers, are portrayed in the shape of growlers. The little birds in the cage represent the Comunale's dancers, while the cat was apparently the pet of the impresario.<sup>60</sup> The picture is no satire on Wagner, whether on his status as an emblem of modernity or on his mythological paraphernalia: the composer is nowhere to be seen, except perhaps in the guise of the semi-strangled swan. The key figure is, rather, the entrepreneur responsible for the moving production. Scalaberni, one of the last influential impresarios in Italy, shows off his material and cultural possessions, his display pointing at once back to and beyond traditional models of theater management. His despotic attitude, sceptre-like walking stick, and steering pose stood on the verge of anachronism at a time when opera production was increasingly falling under the control of music publishers. At the same time, the stock of properties he exhibits, suggestive of a traveling circus, points to a timely redefinition of the operatic product as a widely circulating industrial commodity.<sup>61</sup>

[INSERT FIG. 3 ABOUT HERE]

Nineteenth-century parallels between trains and theater were historically the outgrowth of the theatricalization of travel that the new medium of transportation brought about. If the steam engine had served a spectacular function at its origins, in later years railway speed and the panoramic perception with which it was associated famously prompted descriptions molded

in theatrical imagery. One recurrent trope was the likening of the locomotive to the figure of the stage manager.<sup>62</sup> In Grossi's picture, Scalaberni seems to vaguely recall such association; but spectacle and machinery nevertheless stand in a reversed relationship: it is opera *as* technology that hails as Scalaberni's swan-locomotive glides down the tracks. The traditional assemblage of opera's components is laid bare precisely at the moment when the integrity of the artwork—the production—gains aesthetic currency, its full-blown relocation becoming technically possible. Old and new, bodies and machines, exist side by side here; in fact, they epitomize Italy's ambiguous relationship with technological modernity. *Lohengrin*'s journey stages, even enacts, the transportational advances of the nation. But the disproportionate body dwarfing the train's all-too-slim engine and wheels also acts as a reminder: the path trod by late-nineteenth-century Italian culture more often resembled the vagrancies of a toy train in a children's playroom than the straight, lofty tracks of the technological sublime.

By 1892, when Grossi's lithograph was published, several operatic transfers on the model of Scalaberni's *Lohengrin* enterprise had materialized, usually involving (again) a mixture of private and municipal theaters. A *trasferimento di spettacolo* took place in 1880 between Piacenza's Teatro Municipale and the Pagliano. After its premiere and a run of performances promoted by a committee of *piacentini*, Auteri-Manzocchi's *Stella*—the almost-entire original company, a chorus and orchestra of 70 each, conductor, chorus master, *direttore di scena*, and sets—was removed and dispatched to Florence by a train journey that took an impressive 14 hours (see Fig. 4).<sup>63</sup> The rights to the opera were, perhaps not coincidentally, owned by Edoardo Sonzogno, the Milanese music publisher and proprietor of newspapers and magazines who in the final decades of the century extended his control over a vast network of theaters. Although he was not alone in promoting an integrated production and media system for opera, his publishing house was at the vanguard of modern marketing strategies that reshaped the operatic medium along modern industrial lines.<sup>64</sup> And, later in the 1880s, Sonzogno catalyzed some translocations of his own. During the 1889 Carnival season, he

arranged for a series of “ready-made” opera products to be transported from the Teatro Costanzi in Rome to Florence’s La Pergola.<sup>65</sup> The arrival of “magician Sonzogno,” with over 200 people brought by a special train, caused agitation within the Florentine orchestra, particularly after it was ejected also from the Pagliano.<sup>66</sup> But the publisher’s supporters defended his delivery of operatic “packages” as necessary due to lack of rehearsal time. One presumably unbiased journalist (he was writing for the *Gazzetta piemontese*) assured his readers that the same approach—carting “*tutto già allestito*”—would be adopted in Venice after the end of the Florentine season.<sup>67</sup>

[INSERT FIG. 4 ABOUT HERE]

Operatic mobility, particularly from the age of Rossini onwards, has been invoked in recent (and less recent) narratives of increasing worldwide interconnectedness. In his mammoth account of the mammoth reach of nineteenth-century globalization, the historian Jürgen Osterhammel flips through the history of the operatic genre, positioning it as an early comer to and paramount aesthetic agent in the “increased *mobility*” of the modern world. Within what he depicts as a predominantly Western and metropolitan-driven operatic economy at mid-century, he picks Paris as the “clear radial point”—a gesture he follows up by tracing a hodgepodge of movements that simultaneously reassert and undermine the city’s pivotal status.<sup>68</sup> When it comes to the mobilization of full-blown opera productions, however, the most well-known nineteenth-century incarnation of the overarching technological and ideological apparatus that such enterprises involved is probably Angelo Neumann’s traveling Wagner-Theater, which toured Europe in 1882-83, taking the *Ring* to twenty-five cities. Predicated largely on aesthetic premises—the touring production was marketed as a faithful recreation of the 1876 original Bayreuth staging—the Theater’s travels were in later years measured by Neumann against the yardstick of the legendary tours (beginning in 1874) of the Meiningen

Company.<sup>69</sup> As Gundula Kreuzer has argued, a tension was inscribed in Bayreuth from its origins that constructed it simultaneously as a stationary festival and as a place that could be altogether “transplanted” elsewhere. Touring was a means of propagating authenticity, a principle that also lay behind the more-or-less contemporary rise of opera staging manuals.<sup>70</sup> The increasing sophistication (particularly from the 1880s) of the Italian *disposizioni sceniche* indeed points, as Alessandra Campana has recently shown, to the contemporary redefinition of opera’s status as medium, a process that was entwined with a nascent industrialization of culture.<sup>71</sup>

As specific forms of near-total theatrical recreation, in which so many of the personnel and materials were retained throughout subsequent performances in multiple locations, late-nineteenth-century mobile productions were nevertheless ultimately independent, I would argue, from such forms of textual support. The transfers themselves, that is, were not directly encouraged by staging manuals, even while they participated in the same cultural trends described by Campana. In fact—and to put a blunt technological spin on the argument pursued so far—one could claim that late-nineteenth-century operatic translocations were as much attempts at disseminating authoritative versions of the works as they were attempts at a performance’s mechanical *reproduction*: gestures of disinterment, as it were, with an iterative quality; undertakings that made the train into an early record player of sorts.

What is more, and as Grossi’s caricature makes clear, railways also formed a new part of opera productions’ basic infrastructure. The “gigantic and complicated apparatus” (to borrow Neumann’s words) that made possible late-nineteenth-century operatic transfers involved a hard media system in which multiple human and material components combined to form a single whole.<sup>72</sup> The result was an extension of the railway’s own “nexus system,” where each part (tracks, train, signals, and so on) performs a separate function that is indispensable for the working of the overall machine.<sup>73</sup> In later years, the Fascist thespian cars that toured the Italian peninsula, bringing both operas and spoken dramas (as well as demountable

playhouses) to provincial audiences, took this portable, heterogeneous totality to an extreme. As they turned the human and mechanical labor that preceded and accompanied the performances itself into a source of spectacle, they made the ethos of efficiency and the corporatism encapsulated in the assembling process into the hallmark of Italian modernity as envisioned by the regime.<sup>74</sup>

The extent to which opera and late-nineteenth-century railway technology became integrated with each other comes across clearly from the more imaginative historical ruminations on the subject. The new commercial strategies that Scalaberni and (subsequently) Sonzogno had undertaken undoubtedly lie behind a critic's joke in 1889 concerning rumors that Alberto Franchetti's *Asrael*, just performed in Florence, might be translocated to Rome: "Here," this distraught observer contended, "truly important musical novelties come by cargo train."<sup>75</sup> His outburst of parochial anxiety was resonant with other recent memories. In April 1887, following its debut at La Scala, Verdi's *Otello* had traveled to Rome with "168 people and 14 tons of equipment and materials."<sup>76</sup> The impresario Guglielmo Canori, who ran the Costanzi, had, long before the opera's Milanese premiere, secured the right to put on a series of performances from the publisher Giulio Ricordi and La Scala's management. Initially the Roman production was to involve only the Milanese company and the conductor Franco Faccio, together with a dozen or so chorus members from La Scala. In addition, Canori had recruited the orchestra and chorus of Rome's Apollo theater. Yet, when just a few weeks before the performances were due to start, the Roman musicians proved unavailable, the impresario hastened to hire the entire musical corps of La Scala. Eventually only the soprano and mezzo-soprano were appointed anew, while the original set designs by Carlo Ferrario were refashioned by Giovanni Zuccarelli based on Verdi's input.<sup>77</sup>

The eight performances at the Costanzi were the result of an operatic move in which railway technology was key: not only as an enabler for physical mobility, but also as a discursive space where travel became incorporated into Verdi's work and the labor of

performance. An article from the newspaper *Il pungolo* describing the departure of La Scala's "artistic caravan" from Milan's station neatly articulates the relationship between transportation medium and opera. The train plays an interestingly ambiguous function: it stands as at once medium of transportation (or locomotion) and the tangible operatic work itself. A ten-carriage (or so) special convoy supplied by the Mediterranea company, it is pulled by a puffing locomotive suitably called "Apollo." Three wagons are assigned to props and costumes alone, while the remaining are stuffed with "*otellisti*." The latter's luggage surplus comes to signify beyond the immediate context of this Verdi transfer: in the pen of the author, it evokes by then customary scenes of Italian emigrants leaving for America (scenes in which opera singers, musicians, and impresarios had long been prominent participants). A medium intended to displace—to uproot and re-route—"the incarnation, so to speak, of Verdi's latest work," the train also becomes *identified with* the human and material substance of the production. The "treno *Otello*," as it has since been known, is an amalgam of technological and non-technological components whereby operatic travel becomes autonomized, perhaps even absolutized.<sup>78</sup> For that reason, it can serve as a backdrop against which further mobility experiences may be evaluated.

Following a stop back in Milan, *Otello*'s trip continued to Venice, where the Roman company and the original La Scala sets were joined by local musicians (much to the relief of those Venetians who feared that La Fenice might fall back on foreign resources when it came to hiring orchestra and chorus).<sup>79</sup> Municipal anxieties were ever lurking, particularly in the context of such translocations, where every piece and step of the opera-package delivery was hardly predictable. On the eve of the opera's Roman debut, after the umpteenth rehearsal of the allures of sameness—same *Otello*, same Jago, same Cassio as in Milan, and so forth—a local critic voiced his unease at the uncertainties of a transfer that was liable to leak from any part of the machine. "If it is the case that, as everybody assures us, we will lose nothing at all in this exchange, then," he predicted, "the success of *Otello* will be equal to that which it has had in

Milan.”<sup>80</sup> If it is the case. Traveling productions were the offshoot of a conception of performances that were themselves, alongside so-called works, starting to be deemed canonical. Sharing in a function that musical compositions had played since earlier during the century, stagings could now be vaunted as media actualizing increasingly widely-shared aesthetic and historical experiences.<sup>81</sup> Yet, their relocations could not help but simultaneously expose the foes of what Cresswell has called Western thought’s “sedentarist metaphysics:” the more menacing aspects of modern mobility; its threat to order, its dysfunctional character, its resistance to acts of control and regulation.<sup>82</sup> Behind the railway’s highly interconnected system, behind its staging of efficiency and mechanical precision, lurked the possibility of unexpected accidents and malfunctions. For all the appeal that the “treno Otello” carried along the route, it could not dispel a suspicion toward a form of operatic movement that projected as much potential for loss and disruption—aesthetic, cultural, technological, and commercial—as for authenticity and equitable exchange.

### **Deadly Spins**

There is one final thread of imagery which I wish to pick up and weave into the tapestry of ideas explored so far: it concerns the deadly immobility that these acts of transportation throw into relief. The various “scenes at a station” we can more or less vividly recapture from contemporary accounts put the mobility of operas, operatic sets, and operatic labor in the uncanny company of mortal remains. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, railway stations were spaces designated for the performance of a variety of public rituals. Florence’s Maria Antonia, which in 1871 was turned into official reception area for the *Lohengrin* performers, in 1865 had functioned as municipal welcome platform for King Victor Emmanuel on his arrival from Turin (following the relocation of the capital).<sup>83</sup> Its vestibular status as entrance door to the modern, nineteenth-century city was heightened by its unusual location right in the heart of the urban center.<sup>84</sup> The bodies greeted at such heterotopic spaces

were, however, as likely to be dead as living. In the summer of that same year 1871, the ashes of the Italian poet and writer Ugo Foscolo came in from England, his late-life abode, for reburial in the national pantheon of Florence's Santa Croce (the same church that has hosted Rossini's remains since they were transferred from Paris in 1887).<sup>85</sup> The celebrations were typical of contemporary Italian funerary tours, the most famous of which was that of the body of the republican thinker Giuseppe Mazzini, whose corpse set off around Tuscany and the Emilia-Romagna region in 1872. Indeed, and as the historian Sergio Luzzatto put it, in the culture of the time "corpses travel[ed], and they d[id] so by railway."<sup>86</sup>

Take this larger cultural dimension of train stations into account and the operatic transits which I have described in this article assume a more sombre quality. There is something funereal about the "dragging" that Apollo, the locomotive, accomplishes as it disappears with the "treno Otello" into the distance; or about the iterative farewells, only minutes earlier, between stayers and leavers "at every move of the train believed to be definitive."<sup>87</sup> If on the one hand, and as explained before, the operatic cargo on rails fulfils a gesture of autonomization, on the other it is the steam engine, not the wagon load, that propels the mass of bodies and materials forward. The freight is rather less than self-sufficient in providing for the source of its own motion.

These deadly undertones, perhaps also a manifestation of those aforementioned anxieties relating to the railway's dysfunctional character, amplify the tensions I have tried to capture here: between mobility and immobility, medium and message, old and new. For another paradox that underpins late-nineteenth-century operatic translocations lies in the comparative "oldness" of the railway as a technology by the 1870s and 1880s when juxtaposed with the "newness" of the operatic movements it came to channel. Oldness not only by European, but also by Italian standards. This recasting of an old technology through a novel techno-cultural gesture reminds us that the politics of movement is as much a function of physical and technological conditions as it is of the encounters between different, and at times



conflicting, historical realities.<sup>88</sup> Rather than subsume different nineteenth-century experiences within a single rubric of heightened mobility, we may well choose to pursue their diminished technological and geographical claims even further. The paradoxes that late-nineteenth-century *trasferimenti di spettacolo* have laid bare encourage us to do so. At the very least, they halt some of the momentum of our grandest scholarly gestures, throwing back into our path actors and borders that are all too easily erased.

Finally, as they traversed newly connected physical lands, those early Italian traveling productions also moved through and between imagined territories: “Italy,” or “Bologna,” or “Florence,” and yet more. Those regions, heavily textured spaces of representation, were, and indeed still are, as resistant as the sturdiest of material fabrics. I like to think that the hard media system that made possible those operatic intrusions also challenged the odd cultural boundary, setting in motion the occasional local image.

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Research for this article has been funded by a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Faculty of Music, Cambridge, and a Junior Research Fellowship at St John’s College, Cambridge. My sincere thanks to the many friends and colleagues who offered me support and encouragement: Alessandro Avallone, Charlotte Bentley, Jeremy Coleman, Katharine Ellis, Kate Guthrie, Axel Körner, Gundula Kreuzer, Emanuele Senici, Jutta Toelle, Ben Walton, and Vera Wolkowicz. James Davies, Alessandra Jones, and two anonymous readers have been

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invaluable sources of inspiration and criticism. Roger Parker lies behind so much of what initially prodded me and still prods me to write, and for that I am grateful.

<sup>1</sup> See the various journal extracts reprinted in Carlo Matteo Mossa, “Una *Messa* per la storia,” in *Messa per Rossini. La storia, il testo, la musica*, ed. Michele Girardi and Pierluigi Petrobelli (Parma: Istituto di studi verdiani and Ricordi, 1988), 11-78: 43-45. Luigi Scalaberni (1823-76) was active during the 1860s and 1870s in various theaters of the Emilia-Romagna, as well as in Florence, Genoa, and Nice among other places.

<sup>2</sup> See Mossa, “Una *Messa* per la storia,” 44.

<sup>3</sup> The Capitolato for the 1871 autumn season is dated May 26, 1871 (ACB, Scritture private 1871), yet due to lack of applicants the *impresa* was not filled until mid August. Two projects were at that point considered: one presented by Giovanni Bolelli on behalf of Lambertini, and another presented by Scalaberni on behalf of Cesare Gaibi (ACB, Atti della giunta municipale, July 15 and August 19, 1871). *Lohengrin* was announced as *opera d’obbligo* a few days before the impresario was chosen (*Monitore di Bologna*, August 11, 1871, 2). A letter that the agent Luigi Monti sent to Giulio Ricordi on August 5, 1871 suggests that arrangements to produce the opera were made by the conductor Angelo Mariani and the mayor Camillo Casarini rather than by the *impresa*; the letter is reproduced in Frank Walker, *L’uomo Verdi*, trans. Franca Medioli Cavara (Milan: Mursia, 1964), 455-56.

<sup>4</sup> “magnificenza veramente asiatica.” F. M., in *Monitore di Bologna*, November 2, 1871, 3. “Magnificenza asiatica” was a common nineteenth-century phrase for exceptional displays of splendour. All translations from Italian are my own unless otherwise stated.

<sup>5</sup> Axel Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy: From Unification to Fascism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 237. On opera and Bologna’s nineteenth-century cultural politics, see Cormac Newark, “‘In Italy We Don’t Have the Means for Illusion’: *Grand Opéra* in Nineteenth-Century Bologna,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 19, no. 3 (2007): 199-222;

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Körner, *Politics of Culture*, 47-65, 221-62; and Körner, “From Hindustan to Brabant: Meyerbeer’s *L’africane* and Municipal Cosmopolitanism in Post-Unification Italy,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 29, no. 1 (2017): 74-93. On the trans-municipal discourses in which early Italian productions of *Lohengrin* were embedded, see Emilio Sala, “Il ‘cavaliere dell’oca’ cacciato dalla Scala. Il fiasco milanese del *Lohengrin* (1873) e il suo contesto,” in *Un duplice anniversario: Giuseppe Verdi e Richard Wagner*, ed. Ilaria Bonomi, Franca Cella, and Luciano Martini (Milan: Istituto lombardo di scienze e lettere, 2014), 9-32.

<sup>6</sup> “congresso preistorico ossia antediluviano,” “*Abbasso il presente*,” “doppia nebbia del passato e del futuro.” *L’affondatore*, September 24, 1871, 15. See also *Gazzetta dell’Emilia*, September 1, 1871, 1, and *L’arpa*, August 18, 1871, 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Le monde artiste*, March 22, 1896, 188.

<sup>8</sup> Besides Bologna, the cities that have received the most sustained attention by scholars researching local operatic institutions, repertoire trends, and discourses are Milan and Florence. See, for instance, some of the work by Laura Protano-Biggs, Emanuele Senici, Jutta Toelle, and Francesca Vella on the former; and by Marcello De Angelis and Fiamma Nicolodi on the latter.

<sup>9</sup> “una certa dipendenza culturale.” Ute Jung, “La fortuna di Wagner in Italia,” in *Wagner in Italia*, ed. Giancarlo Rostirolla (Turin: ERI, 1982), 55-225: 159; and Körner, *Politics of Culture*, 235.

<sup>10</sup> For practical reasons, I will use the words “translocation,” “transfer,” and “relocation” as synonyms to refer to the physical transportation of all (or most) of the human and material apparatus of a production from one a city or theater to another.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 1.

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<sup>12</sup> See Stephen Greenblatt, “Cultural Mobility: An Introduction” and “A Mobility Studies Manifesto,” in *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 1-23, 250-53.

<sup>13</sup> *L'ancora*, December 10, 1871, 260 (“gone by railway”). “Ito” (from the verb “ire”) is an archaic form for “andato;” today it survives mostly in Tuscan dialect.

<sup>14</sup> “meditare e copiare quanto farà al caso nostro,” “con una accuratezza senza pari.” *L'arpa*, September 11, 1871, 16. See also *L'affondatore*, September 16 and 24, 1871, 10-11, 14-15; Mariani’s letter to Carlo Del Signore (September 9, 1871), in Umberto Zoppi, *Angelo Mariani, Giuseppe Verdi e Teresa Stolz in un carteggio inedito* (Milan: Garzanti, 1947), 261-63; and Camillo Casarini, *Ai nostri concittadini. Risposta dell’ex-sindaco Commend. Camillo Casarini e dei suoi colleghi di Giunta* (Bologna: Società tipografica dei compositori, 1872), 12.

<sup>15</sup> Set and costume designs for early productions of *Lohengrin* in Italy were often based on German models, when not directly prepared in Germany. See *Da Rossini a Verdi. Immagini del teatro romantico. Disegni di costumi per opere e balli* (Turin: Stamperia artistica nazionale, 1981), 47-49.

<sup>16</sup> See ASCB, CA 1871, Tit. X, 3, 4, 9676, 9787; Mariani’s letter to Carlo Del Signore (December 1, 1871), in Zoppi, *Angelo Mariani*, 310-11; *Gazzetta d’Italia*, quoted in *L'ancora*, November 29, 1871, 248; and *L’Italia nuova*, November 29, 1871, 3.

<sup>17</sup> See ASCF, Affari generali 1871, Ufficio del Sindaco, 3842, 4019; and ASCF, Deliberazioni di giunta, November 21 and December 11, 1871.

<sup>18</sup> See *L’Italia nuova*, November 24, 1871, 3, and *Il sistro*, November 24, 1871, 180.

<sup>19</sup> “Nato, o a meglio dire trapiantato in Bologna, morirà in Bologna.” *L'affondatore*, November 11, 1871, 43.

<sup>20</sup> See *Monitore di Bologna*, 7 December 1871, 2. For the musicians’ welcome in Florence, see *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* (henceforth *GMM*), December 10, 1871, 417.

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<sup>21</sup> See *L'ancora*, December 6, 1871, 256.

<sup>22</sup> “Non adopero a casaccio il verbo trasportare. Si tratta di mettere in iscena il *Lohengrin* al teatro Pagliano con i medesimi artisti che lo cantano ora al Comunale di Bologna con tanto successo; e si tratta anche di portar qui i scenari, il macchinismo, il vestiario, il Mariani concertatore e direttore, e una parte anche, se non quasi tutta o tutta l’orchestra di Bologna.” *Gazzetta d’Italia*, quoted in *Monitore di Bologna*, November 15, 1871, 2. For similar reports, see *L’affondatore*, November 18, 1871, 48; *Gazzetta toscana*, November 15, 1871, 3; *L’ancora*, November 29, 1871, 248; and *La stampa*, December 10, 1871, 2. The news also appeared in the foreign press. See *Pall Mall Budget*, December 22, 1871, 12-13.

<sup>23</sup> “tutto verrà insaccato da Bologna col treno merci 49, piccola velocità.” *Il fanfulla*, November 23, 1871, 2.

<sup>24</sup> “tutto di un pezzo, anzi, per dir meglio in circa 400 pezzi.” *Il corriere italiano*, November 24, 1871, 3.

<sup>25</sup> See ASCB, CA 1871, Tit. X, 3, 4, 10369. Writing to Carlo Del Signore on December 1, 1871, Mariani pointed out the sonic implications of the opera’s relocation: “Appena che sarò arrivato a Firenze . . . farò una prova per studiare gli effetti secondo la sonorità di quella vastissima sala [il teatro Pagliano]; farò poi una prova generale . . . e credo che basteranno quelle due prove per assuefare queste masse all’ampiezza e sonorità del nuovo locale.” Quoted in Zoppi, *Angelo Mariani*, 310-11.

<sup>26</sup> See *L’ancora*, December 13, 1871, 264.

<sup>27</sup> See *Boccherini*, February 20, 1872, 7.

<sup>28</sup> “sacco da viaggio.” *Il mondo artistico*, December 17, 1871, 4.

<sup>29</sup> *L’affondatore*, November 11, 1871, 43; *Gazzetta piemontese*, January 25, 1872, 2; *Le Ménestrel*, December 31, 1871, 37; and *Cosima Wagner’s Diaries*, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin

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and Dietrich Mack, trans. Geoffrey Skelton, *Volume I, 1869-1877* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1978), 439 (entry from December 14, 1871).

<sup>30</sup> John Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The Role of the Impresario* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), 147-49. On touring opera in the US, see Katherine K. Preston, *Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825-60* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> The operas involved were Donizetti's *La favorita* and *Poliuto*, Auteri-Manzocchi's *Dolores*, Branca's *La catalana*, Meyerbeer's *L'africana*, and Wagner's *Rienzi*. *La catalana* was performed only at the Pergola in 1876, but the sets had been prepared for a production planned at the Pagliano the previous year. See ASCF, Affari generali 1875, 4791; AAI, 54.2 (1875), 2678, 2683, 2688; AAI, 55.1 (1876), 2696, 2697; and AAI, 55.2 (1877), 2717, 2718. After Scalaberni died in November 1876, he was succeeded by Enea Brizzi at the Pergola and probably by his own son Alberto at the Pagliano.

<sup>32</sup> See Francesco Righetti's letter to Giuliano Capranica (July 30, 1860), repr. in Teresa Viziano Fenzi, *Il palcoscenico di Adelaide Ristori: repertorio, scenario e costumi di una compagnia drammatica dell'Ottocento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2000), 310 (fn. 25); and AAI, 54.2 (1875), 2678, 2683.

<sup>33</sup> "nessuno spende Dieci quando può sentire lo stesso con Quattro." Peruzzi to the Presidente dell'Accademia degli Immobili (June 10, 1875), in AAI, 54.2 (1875), 2688.

<sup>34</sup> "combinazione." *L'arpa*, June 9, 1876, 61. Scalaberni was represented by Enea Brizzi at the Pergola and by Ercole Bolognini at the Comunale.

<sup>35</sup> On Scalaberni's deal with Lucca, see *Il sistro*, June 26, 1876, 94, and Guarany, in *Rivista italiana*, repr. in *GMM*, September 9, 1876, 312.

<sup>36</sup> See AAI, 55.1 (1876), 2697; and ACB, CA 1876, Tit. X, 3, 4, 5446, 6073, 7041. The scenery was designed by Tito Gianni (*L'Africana* and *Dolores*) and Cesare Recanatini (*Rienzi*). A

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playbill for the Comunale made the plans for the circulation of musical talents clear: “I distinti Artisti che agiscono nella corrente Stagione al R. Teatro *Pagliano* di *Firenze*, sono a disposizione dell’impresa del Teatro *Comunale*.” Repr. in Luigi Bignami, *Cronologia di tutti gli spettacoli rappresentati nel gran Teatro Comunale di Bologna dalla solenne sua apertura 14 maggio 1763 a tutto l’Autunno 1880* (Bologna: Agenzia Commerciale, 1880), 208.

<sup>37</sup> “*Dolores* lasciando le scene infide di Bologna si trasporterà armi e bagaglio a Firenze.” *Gazzetta dei teatri*, October 28, 1876, 11. On *Rienzi*’s Florentine peregrinations, see “V. M.,” in *GMM*, May 2, 1877, 177.

<sup>38</sup> Such as the project for a Società per il teatro lirico italiano (1904; never established), the Società teatrale Italo-Argentina (1907), and the Società teatrale internazionale (1908), all discussed in Matteo Paoletti, *Mascagni, Mocchi, Sonzogno. La Società teatrale internazionale (1908-1931) e i suoi protagonisti* (Bologna: Alma Mater Studiorum, 2015).

<sup>39</sup> For these debates, see, for instance, Verdi’s letter to Opprandino Arrivabene (February 5, 1876), in *Verdi intimo. Carteggio di Giuseppe Verdi con il Conte Opprandino Arrivabene (1861-1886)*, ed. Annibale Alberti (Milan: Mondadori, 1931), 185-87; and Girolamo Alessandro Biaggi, “Rassegna musicale,” *Nuova antologia* 25, no. 2 (1874): 491-502, here 495-97.

<sup>40</sup> “l’impresario progettista per eccellenza.” *Il mondo artistico*, December 17, 1871, 4. See also *Il sistro*, June 26, 1876, 94; *Boccherini*, August 31, 1876, 31; and *Gazzetta dei teatri*, November 25, 1876, 15.

<sup>41</sup> See ACB, CA 1876, Tit. X, 3, 4, 11028, and *L’Italia artistica*, December 1, 1876, 3.

<sup>42</sup> See Albert Schram, *Railways and the Formation of the Italian State in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 116.

<sup>43</sup> See *L’ancora*, December 13, 1871, 264.

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<sup>44</sup> Charles Richard Weld, *Florence: The New Capital of Italy* (London: Longsman, Green, 1867), 1, 5, 2.

<sup>45</sup> See Renzo Zagnoni, “Una singolare veduta della ferrovia transappennina del 1864,” in *Panorama della Strada-Ferrata delli Appennini Bologna, Pistoja, Firenze*, ed. Zagnoni and Gian Paolo Borghi (Porretta Terme and Pracchia: Gruppo di studi Alta Valle del Reno and Pro Loco, 2008 [anast. repr. of 1865 ed.]), 2-5. On railway-travel views as compared to projections of magic lanterns, see Luigi Arcozzi Masino, *Il Cicerone delle strade ferrate. Linea Torino-Ciriè, illustrata da sette fotografie eseguite dal Cav. Montabone* (Turin: Foa, 1869), 4.

<sup>46</sup> See Schram, *Railways*, 3-5, 157-64.

<sup>47</sup> “un movimento incessante di persone in ogni senso.” Camillo Cavour, *Le strade ferrate in Italia*, ed. Arnaldo Salvestrini (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1976 [1846]), 61.

“materialmente e moralmente ravvicinate.” Giacomo Durando, *Della nazionalità italiana. Saggio politico-militare* (Losanna: Bonamici e Compagni, 1846), 75.

<sup>48</sup> See Schram, *Railways*, 72, and Stefano Maggi, *Le ferrovie* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), 52, 54.

<sup>49</sup> “Il vapore, le strade ferrate, l’elettricità non tolsero solamente le distanze, ma compiono anche un’altr’opera, di cui vediamo tuttodi più chiari gli effetti. Le diversità fra gli usi ed i costumi dei popoli diventano ogni giorno minori, e verrà tempo in cui spariranno affatto. . . . Anzi si può dire che per le arti e per le lettere non vi sono più confini.” F[rancesco Flores] D’Arcais, “Giuseppe Verdi e la musica italiana,” *Nuova antologia di scienze, lettere ed arti* 7, no. 3 (1868): 566-75, here 567.

<sup>50</sup> “La celerità dei viaggi, l’agevolezza degli scambi.” Quoted from Enrico Bottrigari, *Cronaca di Bologna*, ed. Aldo Berselli, 4 vols. (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1960-62), IV, 1868-1871, 210.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Maynard [pseud. of Willert Beale], *The Enterprising Impresario* (London: Bradbury, Evans & Co, 1867), 99-100. On touring practices in French theater after the 1860s, see F. W. J.



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Hemmings, *Theatre and State in France, 1760-1905* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 156-59. For a multi-center approach to opera in late-nineteenth-century France, see Katharine Ellis, “‘How to Make Wagner Normal’: *Lohengrin*’s Tour de France of 1891/92,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 25, no. (2013): 121-37. On touring opera in Great Britain, see Paul Rodmell, *Opera in the British Isles, 1875–1918* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), esp. 131-84.

<sup>52</sup> For the debates about the Milan-Venice line during the 1830s and 1840s and the role played by Carlo Cattaneo in supporting the “linea delle città,” see Adolfo Bernardello, *La prima ferrovia fra Venezia e Milano. Storia della imperial-regia privilegiata strada ferrata Ferdinanda Lombardo-Veneta (1835-1852)* (Venice: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 1996).

<sup>53</sup> From 194,001 units at the beginning of 1870 to 167,093 at the beginning of 1872. See Ugo Giusti, *Demografia fiorentina: 1862-1914* (Florence: Barbera, 1916), 17.

<sup>54</sup> See Anna Pellegrino, *La città più artigiana d’Italia: Firenze, 1861-1929* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2012), 42-48.

<sup>55</sup> “ognuno di que’ mille e mille partenti . . . portava anche via con sé qualche atomo, sia pure invisibile ed imponderabile, di quel complesso materiale e morale.” Ugo Pesci, *Firenze capitale (1865-1870). Dagli appunti di un ex-cronista* (Florence: Bemporad, 1904), 511.

<sup>56</sup> In 1865, in the wake of the Turin-Florence transfer, the number of trains traveling through Bologna doubled within just a few weeks. See Maurizio Panconesi, *Le ferrovie di Pio IX. Nascita, sviluppo e tramonto delle strade ferrate dello Stato Pontificio (1846-1870)* (Cortona: Calosci, 2005), 243.

<sup>57</sup> “ex-capitale.” *L’affondatore*, November 18, 1871, 48. “Dopo l’inaugurazione del Parlamento a Roma, certo questo era l’avvenimento più importante che accader potesse nel Regno d’Italia.” *GMM*, December 10, 1871, 417.

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<sup>58</sup> “Arriverà sulla nave condotta dal poetico cigno, invece di arrivare con la strada ferrata: e ciò forse per non entrare in litigi a proposito del treno internazionale.” *Gazzetta d’Italia*, quoted in *Monitore di Bologna*, November 19, 1871, 2; see also *Monitore di Bologna*, December 6, 1871, 3.

<sup>59</sup> “Il divo Mariani deve imbarcarsi stasera sulla mistica nave col battaglione sacro degli artisti ch’ei dirige da esperto capitano.” *Monitore di Bologna*, December 6, 1871, 3.

<sup>60</sup> See John Grand-Carteret, *Wagner en caricatures. 130 reproductions de caricatures françaises, allemandes, italiennes, portraits, autographes* (Paris: Larousse, 1892), 235-36. The caption refers to the image as a “*caricature inédite*.” Almost all other caricatures in Grand-Carteret’s volume are reproductions; the few ones that were executed specifically for that collection are indicated at the end of the book (Grossi’s does not fall in this list).

<sup>61</sup> On this shift, see Alan Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera: From Verismo to Modernism, 1890-1915* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2007), 208-24; and Jutta Toelle, *Oper als Geschäft: Impresari an italienischen Opernhäuser 1860-1900* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2007).

<sup>62</sup> See Kyle Gillette, *Railway Travel in Modern Theatre: Transforming the Space and Time of the Stage* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2014), 5-8; and Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 52-69.

<sup>63</sup> See *Gazzetta dei teatri*, June 24, 1880, 2, and *Il piccolo*, June 27, 1880, 3. The transfer was seemingly set up by the impresario Guglielmo Speroni and the Tuscan Enea Brizzi, and required the intervention of Piacenza’s mayor. See *Gazzetta musicale di Firenze*, June 30, 1880, 6; *Cosmorama pittorico*, June 25, 1880, 4; and ASPc, Comune di Piacenza, Spettacoli e feste pubbliche poi Pubblica sicurezza, Carteggio generale (1.15.1.1), b. 52. Two rather unsuccessful performances took place at the Pagliano on June 24 and 26.

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<sup>64</sup> On Sonzogno, see Silvia Valisa, “Casa editrice Sonzogno. Mediazione culturale, circuiti del sapere ed innovazione tecnologica nell’Italia unificata (1861-1900),” in *The Printed Media in Fin-de-siècle Italy: Publishers, Writers, and Readers*, ed. Ann Hallamore Caesar, Gabriella Romani, and Jennifer Burns (Cambridge: Legenda, 2011), 90–106; and Marco Capra, “La Casa Editrice Sonzogno tra giornalismo e impresariato,” in *Casa musicale Sonzogno: cronologie, saggi, testimonianze*, ed. Mario Morini, Nandi Ostali, and Piero Ostali Jr., 2 vols. (Milan: Casa Musicale Sonzogno, 1995), I, 243-90.

<sup>65</sup> Including Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Thomas’s *Mignon*, and Auteri-Manzocchi’s *Il conte di Gleichen*, as well as Paolo Taglioni’s ballo *I due soci*. The Florentine casts for both *Orfeo* and *Mignon* nevertheless coincided only in part with the Roman ones. See AAI, 59.1 (1889), 2937; AAI, Manifesti 1147 (*Orfeo*) and 1148 (*Mignon*); and, for some press news, *La tribuna*, February 15, 1889, 2, and “A...,” in *GMM*, February 17, 1889, 110.

<sup>66</sup> “mago Sonzogno.” Aroldo, in *Il mondo artistico*, March 1, 1889, 4. The figure is taken from *La tribuna*, February 15, 1889, 2. For the complaints, see, for instance, *La tribuna*, February 26, 1889, 2.

<sup>67</sup> *Gazzetta piemontese*, February 27, 1889, 2. Whether or not the Costanzi’s full musical corps was due to relocate to Venice, eventually only the three singers who had sung *Orfeo* in Florence starred in a single performance at La Fenice in March. Presumably the scenery was brought along for the occasion. More indicative still of Sonzogno’s attitude to opera as package was his supply of musical personnel and staging materials from Rome for an Italian opera season at the Théâtre de la Gaîté in Paris during the 1889 World Fair. See *Le Rappel*, April 3, 1889, 4; and “Programma degli spettacoli che si daranno nel Teatro Costanzi dall’Ottobre 1888 all’Aprile 1889,” AC, Gabinetto del Sindaco di Roma, Tit. 25, b. 108, f. 4.

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<sup>68</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 910 and 5-6 (emphasis in original).

<sup>69</sup> See Angelo Neumann, *Personal Recollections of Wagner*, trans. Edith Livermore (New York: Henry Holt, 1908), 243.

<sup>70</sup> See Gundula Kreuzer, “Authentizität, Visualisierung, Bewahrung: Das reisende, Wagner-Theater’ und die Konservierbarkeit von Inszenierungen,” in *Angst vor der Zerstörung. Der Meister Künste zwischen Archiv und Erneuerung*, ed. Robert Sollich, Clemens Risi, Sebastian Reus, and Stephan Jöris (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2008), 139-60: 144-8; and Kreuzer, *Curtain, Gong, Steam: Wagnerian Technologies of Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 222-23.

<sup>71</sup> See Alessandra Campana, *Opera and Modern Spectatorship in Late Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: CUP, 2015), 1-14.

<sup>72</sup> Neumann, *Personal Recollections*, 311.

<sup>73</sup> John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 94.

<sup>74</sup> See Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Staging Fascism: 18BL and the Theater of Masses for Masses* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 17-22.

<sup>75</sup> “Qui [a Roma] le novità musicali veramente importanti giungono col treno merci.” “A...,” in *GMM*, April 21, 1889, 263. The transfer nevertheless did not materialize.

<sup>76</sup> “168 persone e 14 tonnellate di attrezzi e materiali.” *L’elettrico*, April 9-10, 1887, 3. In other reports the human contingent ballooned to 200. See *Corriere della sera*, April 12, 1887, 2.

<sup>77</sup> See Vittorio Frajese, *Dal Costanzi all’Opera: cronache, recensioni e documenti*, 4 vols. (Rome: Capitolium, 1977-78), I, 81-2; Matteo Incagliati, *Il teatro Costanzi, 1880-1907. Note e appunti della vita teatrale a Roma* (Rome: Tipografia editrice Roma, 1907), 73-79; and *Carteggio Verdi-Ricordi 1886-1888*, ed. Angelo Pompilio and Madina Ricordi (Parma: Istituto

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nazionale di studi verdiani, 2010), 108-109, 190 (fn. 8). The agent Carlo D'Ormeville was the intermediary between Canori and La Scala. See Biblioteca Livia Simoni (Milan), Box L, 26. While an extremely detailed *disposizione scenica* was published by Ricordi, this had not yet been prepared when the Milan-Rome *Otello* transfer took place.

<sup>78</sup> “carovana artistica milanese,” “l’incarnazione, diremo così, dell’ultimo lavoro di Verdi.” *Il pungolo*, repr. in *Gazzetta di Venezia*, April 14, 1887, 2. On the departure of “treno *Otello*,” see also *Corriere della sera*, April 12, 1887, 2, and *GMM*, April 17, 1887, 120-21.

<sup>79</sup> See the declaration of the impresarios Cesare and Enrico Corti in *Gazzetta di Venezia*, January 29, 1887, 3.

<sup>80</sup> “Se è vero, come tutti ci assicurano, che non perderemo affatto nulla in questo scambio—il successo dell’*Otello* sarà pari a quello di Milano.” *La tribuna*, April 16, 1887, 2.

<sup>81</sup> See Francesca Vella, “Milan, *Simon Boccanegra* and the Late-Nineteenth-Century Operatic Museum,” *Verdi Perspektiven* 1 (2016): 93-121.

<sup>82</sup> See Cresswell, *On the Move*, esp. 26-42.

<sup>83</sup> See Pesci, *Firenze capitale*, 63-65.

<sup>84</sup> See Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 171-77.

<sup>85</sup> See Pellegrino Artusi, *Vita di Ugo Foscolo. Note al carne dei Sepolcri. Ristampa del Viaggio sentimentale di Yorick tradotto da Didimo Chierico* (Florence: Barbera, 1878), 207-19, and Aurelio Gotti, *Narrazione delle feste fatte in Firenze nel maggio 1887 per lo scoprimento della facciata di S. Maria del Fiore e del V centenario dalla nascita di Donatello* (Florence: Landi, 1890), 37-38.

<sup>86</sup> “i cadaveri viaggiano, e lo fanno in ferrovia.” Sergio Luzzatto, *La mummia della repubblica. Storia di Mazzini imbalsamato* (Turin: Einaudi, 2011), 23.

<sup>87</sup> “Alle tre, l’*Apollo*, sbuffando, era sparito trascinando il treno *Otello*,” “ad ogni mossa del treno creduta definitiva.” *Il pungolo*, repr. in *Gazzetta di Venezia*, April 14, 1887, 2.

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<sup>88</sup> For a calling into question of histories of technology focused on invention and innovation in favour of use-centered approaches, see David Edgerton's classic *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History Since 1900* (London: Profile, 2006).